

**LUC**

**DELEU**

**Scale & Perspective**

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**JANUARY 29-MARCH 6**

**1991**

**Gallery Hours:**

**Tuesday-Saturday, 12-6 pm**

**OPENING RECEPTION:**

**January 29, 6-8 pm**

**This exhibition is made possible in part by a special  
grant from the Flemish Minister of Culture.**

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**1/29 - 3/6**

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## Exhibition

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### Earth, passengers and buildings

In these times of great change, architecture could do with a change, too. The traditional place of architecture in society has become obsolete. The concept needs to be redefined. Its task, contents, aims, realization, and its emergence in social space must be re-examined.

The architect would seem to be the obvious person to question architecture, but he is the only person who doesn't. Although everyone knows that lack of destination leads to aimlessness, hardly any thinking has been done about the aims of architecture since the demise of the "modernist heroes." I can't get away from the impression that architects today tend to concentrate on details at the expense of the broad outlines.

As early as 1980, in my "Urban Planning Manifesto," I pointed out the necessity of looking at architecture on a global scale. This immediately and clearly points up the relative significance of a building, especially with a view to the total number of buildings. Since the explosive development of transport (and the transfer of information) in the twentieth century, infrastructures in the world have become all-important. And, although in many places in the world it has become almost impossible to create new waterways, railways, motorways, and airways, this spatial problem is hardly ever thought of as an architectural one.

Improbable as it may seem, the main issue is felt to be a *question of neglect*. All too often, architects are preoccupied with commissions, functions, side issues and objectives that are unworthy of architecture. And when architects do go to great lengths to design the most wonderful spaces, "earthly space" is left to its own devices, to be ruined and wasted by the monetary and political lobby, without any protest, interest or concern from architects. A strange reality!

Apart from its material function, architecture has a spiritual function and task. The imaginative power of architecture must create examples for the future. Architecture must express, record and pass on future perspectives, and it must stimulate the imagination: architecture as medium, as data carrier for future generations. It is not even necessary for architecture to be realized, and not every space needs architectural envelopment. The primordial requirement of architecture is that it should guarantee the freedom of the individual. The creation of freedom is the creation of spiritual space.

The fact that architects solve today's problems does not mean that architecture is only rooted in the present. It is also rooted in the future. After all, infrastructure and architecture have a long to very long life span. Fate forces us to make a choice for many generations to come. It is of the greatest importance that the individual should preserve his or her freedom.

Urban development and planning should increase the number of possibilities, but they usually operate in a repressive atmosphere of what should or should not be done. In Belgium, building legislation, district plans, B.P.A. (development plans), allotment regulations, the Order of Architects, administration, building premiums, and social premiums usually have a repressive effect and are hardly ever stimulating. One example: the ecological call for the reduction of motor traffic will lead to repressive regulations (rush hour taxation, higher rates and taxes, higher petrol prices, stricter parking regulations), but it will not lead to improvements in public transport (more, better and all-night). The advent of the T.G.V. in Europe will not be used to diversify the existing network: it will, to a large extent, run parallel to the present tracks. Also the ideas behind the railway network remain national ideas, many tracks stop at national borders and there are amazingly few border crossings by rail. Antwerp, for instance, has no direct passenger train link with the Ruhr-area, although a track partly alongside the Albert Canal might well be worthy of consideration. The above raises serious questions as to the morality of contemporary architecture, which considers building as a value in itself. Architecture as dogma.

Architecture has two basic scales: man and the earth. Architecture as URBAN PLANNING (the world scale as context) can, in a modest way, contribute to a substantial improvement of the general climate of life on earth. Architecture could see to it that "earthly space" is better organized, made more comfortable and intense. To achieve this, the distinction between "beautiful" and "good" (now indistinguishable in bourgeois parlance) must be restored.

There is a great need for new visionary models for the "earthly space." Contemporary architects may deny it,

but the architect helps to shape society, for the simple reason that he or she has no choice but to work within a social context and space.

Complying with this ethical architectural brief is a challenge, but also a major source of inspiration for every architect. T.O.P. office (Turn On Planning) tries to keep these objectives in mind, and can always be recognized by a consistent adherence to them, rather than by a consistent form.

Between 1970 and 1980, when T.O.P. office was still a one-man organization with occasional contributors, the basis for this approach was created. I took it upon myself to question architecture and building in general. Soon I found out that, especially in the Western world, too much is built too quickly and too rashly; that building is the primary pollution on this earth; and that few people in the building process realize that earthly space is finite and that further annexation of farming land will lead to starvation of others. I also understood that the surface of the sea could be used and that architecture doesn't necessarily lead to immobile structures, and that mobile structures can be valid alternatives.

Then I examined how cities could become more complex, how they could combine more functions within themselves (thereby alleviating the pressure on the country) and still offer greater freedom to their inhabitants. It was a foregone conclusion: greater chaos means greater individual freedom and in this chaos a higher order can be recognized.

The urban development basis for T.O.P. office's work could now be formulated in a number of proposals (proposals are only proposals) and recommendations:

*Proposal for total decentralization (of Antwerp). Proposal for complete abolishment of traffic rules (in Antwerp). Proposal for complete disuse of the public lighting. Proposal to plant fruit avenues. Proposal to switch to 12 volts. Proposal for the implementation of urban dunghill(s). Proposal to introduce plastic money (in Brussels). Proposal for long lawns. Proposal for an open sewerage (in Brugge). Proposal for mobile monuments. Proposal for an international dunghill in the Sabana. Proposal for naked Olympic Games (in Montreal). Proposal for urban wood production. Proposal to shoot nuclear waste to the sun. Proposal for car-free nooses. Proposal for neu-programmed TV broadcasts. Advice for vegetable houses instead of flower-houses. Advice for consumption strikes. Proposal for an irrigation system using rain water. Proposal for visible telephone wiring and electricity cables. Proposal to delectrify monuments and recycle them into social housing. Proposal for free mercury. Proposal for protection of weeds. Proposal for city beehives. Advice to close the zoo (in Antwerp). Proposal for abolition of the law on the protection of title and perfection of architect. Proposal for mod*

*horticulture. Proposal to establish an individual power. Proposal to stop leisure activities. Proposal for the restoration of the public transport. Proposal for road widening. Proposal for road pavements. Proposal for urban agriculture, urban horticulture, and urban forestry. Proposal for city orchards, city pastures, and urban cattle. Proposal for urban fishing ponds. Proposal for urban game.*

These proposals were first visualized in a project for the Quartier des Halles-district in Paris. The principal idea is that *not* building a far-fetched programme preserves the district for the future. The present situation has a powerful character of its own and could, with minimal alterations, generate all kinds of life in and around this district.

This approach does not necessarily lead to a denial of architecture. On the contrary, where possible it can lead to a more intense kind of architecture, more firmly based in society. This does imply that the architect has to surrender his immediate building ambitions to a more theoretical and conceptual approach. (He could, for instance, play with Lego blocks or containers.) To demonstrate this, I decided in 1980 to develop a new urban development principle: "Scale & Perspective." Whereas, since antiquity, the axial, more or less symmetrical perspective has always been a well-known and much-used means of achieving monumentality, I developed an idea of standing and lying volumes, based on sleeping and waking man, which offers a more playful and dynamic monumentality and invites the visitor to explore the entire building, watching identical spaces and volumes from ever-changing angles. With a project based on this principle T.O.P. office received in 1989 an honourable mention at the Housing & the City competition in Barcelona. It is a combination of a standing and a lying volume, incorporating most urban functions and a wide "promenade architecturale." This project is the most elaborate so far.

This theoretical and conceptual approach, a continually recurring theme with T.O.P. office, allows me, as an architect, to assume a very radical stance towards the building customer, an attitude which is also a forceful indictment against the monopoly of architects (as laid down by law in Belgium). When I started up "Scale & Perspective," I also decided to build a great many ready-made houses. I realized the clients' drawings or sketches with hardly any alternations. The hand of the architect was absent. The totality of these houses was called "Luc Deleu manifesto to the Order." This project proves that it is totally unnecessary to give architects the monopoly of building; that in many cases their expertise is unnecessary and even undesirable. I am convinced that principals should only be given houses or buildings that they can visualize. I am even of the opinion that plans are not always necessary for building!



It seems more logical to me that, if one wants to have control over the building process, if one wants to make district plans, structural plans, development plans and such, these only make sense if they serve to enable the "family as principal" to design and build its own nest in total freedom. However, when structures (like limited liability companies, promoters, multinationals, political groups, central administrations) take to building, society must be able to exercise the strictest possible supervision, in order to protect the individual quality of the family from plagues caused by monocultures. In short, like the freedom of the individual is sacred, the containment of structures is necessary. So chaos should be seen as an acquired right of the individual, and order as the counterforce unleashed by the individual within an organization.

I feel that within the broadest possible framework the architect can supply the examples for this.

Luc Deleu, 1990  
Reprinted from *Forum*(34/1)

Translated by Wiebe vander Wal

~~2/1-3/2~~

~~Luc Deleu at~~

~~Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery~~

~~51 Greene Street | NY, NY 10013~~

~~212 | 925-5157~~

~~Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10-6 pm~~

~~Opening reception: Friday, February 1, 6-8 pm~~

## FORUM

### For a Storefront HyperARCHITEXT

With an accumulation of textual opinions: statements, criticism, and suggestions from a known and unknown audience; with a growing series of statements, manifestos, and explanations by Storefront writers, artists and architects; with increased gallery-generated announcements, essays, and dates--with all these documents at hand, Storefront requires a system and format for improved communications if it is to serve writing, discussion, and text-literary/artistic dialogue--as fully as it does visual dialogue. Since textual exchange is, ironically, the foundation for architectural discourse, the neglect of such verbal/textual exchanges and its records in the context

of Storefront's history fosters an information void. It is this void that Storefront needs to fill, creating a forum that will bring together new writers and those who are currently engaged in a dialogue revolving around the gallery, but who, precisely for a lack of a forum are essentially unrecognized Storefront participants. In effect, this lack positions writers as second-class artists, active at Storefront but never acknowledged as equal to the architect/artist/designer.

Several formats are already in place at Storefront, such as discussions and publications. Yet they do not support the notion of a sustained, multifaceted dialogue about Storefront activities and their relationship to each other or the outside world: to politics, literary theory, philosophy, aesthetics, architectural history and theory—even anecdote.

Various electronic forms are currently employed (especially in university English departments) that could serve as a prototype for organizing an information/media system at Storefront, one that employs electronic paths and icons to frame co-authored documents collectively, providing a multi-authored history of the gallery and its satellite activities while also presenting a channel for unrestricted insertion of ideas, opinions, notes, and texts (eventually drawings, digitalized photographs, video, and audio etc.) by anyone willing to venture into the computer database. Loosely following the model of a hypertext document as devised for literary study and documentation—a system of computerized nodes and links of interactive text, graphics, video, and sound that can be entered and exited from various points in the hyperdocument, allowing multiple users to browse, read, or co-author information—Storefront could create and stimulate dialogue between the gallery's willing but currently silent visitors, its critics and champions, artists and architects, and its writers. And once on line, this hyperARCHITEXT could be available to any individual or group equipped with a computer and modum.

By beginning an electronic net of architectural information, Storefront would be strategically positioning itself to benefit from the growth of, and individual reliance on, electronic communication media. In doing so, Storefront, even with technologically modest hardware and software, would begin to position itself not only as an architectural communication center, an organization with a process-documentary of itself, but also as an experimental, showcase model to other organizations for the arrangement and transformation of hypertext into hyperARCHITEXT.

Dennis L. Dollens



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LUC DELEU

STEDEBOUWKUNDIGE ARCHITECT

Storefront for Art & Architecture  
97 Kenmare Street  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10012  
U.S.A.

July 18, 1994.

Dear Kyong,

It was indeed nice to meet you in Vienna.

I think it is a good idea to publish a book about Storefront and I am glad to figure in it with such a lot of material. Enclosed you will find mostly all photographic material you asked for. When possible, I send you slides, otherwise it had to be B/W photographs and cibachromes (see enclosed list).

As you also asked for material on more recent projects since the exhibition, I added :

24. *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona, Detail staircase*

This is a mock-up of a staircase functioning in two directions

25/26. *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona, Detail 'culture' deck and 'sports' deck with swimming pool and Detail swimming pool*

This is a model, which is a detail of the project *Housing (&) the City* (see also copy nr. 21)

27/28. *Journey around the world in 80 days Antwerp-Antwerp via Pacific Ocean 51°13'S - 175°35'W and*

*Journey around the world in 80 days Madrid-Weber-Madrid*

This is a cartographic study to make journeys around the world (great circles = 40.000 km.), starting from Antwerp or from Madrid. Madrid was chosen because it is one of the only European cities that has land as antipode (the antipode of Madrid is Weber).

This study makes it possible to choose the easiest itinerary around the world from Antwerp or Madrid.



If you have any questions or problems, you can always write or phone me.

I am sure you will handle all slides and photographs with the utmost care, as some of them are unique and I trust that you will return all material as soon as possible.

Give my best regards to Shireen, also on behalf of Laurette. We hope all is well with you both and your little son.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Luc Deleu

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long trailing line that extends downwards and to the right.

Photographic material for Storefront (letter July 18, 1994)

1. 35x24 mm. slide : *Mobile Medium University Revisited (floating U.t.A.)*, 1989
2. B/W photograph : *Big triumphat arch*, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 1983
3. B/W photograph : *Big triumphat arch*, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 1983
4. 4,8x5,4 cm. slide : *Small triumphat arch* for the exhibition "Beelden Buiten", Tiel, 1986
5. 35x24 mm. slide : *Scale & Perspective*, Watou, 1988
6. 35x24 mm. slide : *Bridge*, Hoorn, 1990
7. 35x24 mm. slide : *Bridge*, Hoorn, 1990
8. B/W photograph : *Big triumphal arch*, Barcelona, 1987
9. B/W photograph : *Promenade pier*, Flushing, 1985, model
10. B/W negative : *Tent for 'Napoléon'*, first design, photo-copy montage, 1986-88
11. Color photograph : *Tent for 'Napoléon'*, second design, model, 1986-88
12. B/W negative photograph : *Waterloo, Tent for 'Napoléon'* (the movie), 1986-88, Interior view of the tent with projection at night
13. Photocopy : *La Roche-sur-Yon, "En mai, fais ce qu'il te plait", 1989, Tent for 'Napoléon', exercise*, scale 1/200
14. B/W photograph : *Waterloo, Tent for 'Napoléon'*, model, scale 1/5, La Roche-sur-Yon, 1989
15. 6x6 cm. slide : *Principle of a lesson in scale with two identical buildings*, model with QE I and II, 1981
16. Original (unique) copy : *Scale & Perspective with two high-lention pytons*, drawing, 1984
17. 6x6 cm. slide : *Demonstration of Scale & Perspective*, Exhibition "Initiatief '86", Ghent, 1986
18. B/W photograph : *Demonstration of Scale & Perspective*, Exhibition "Initiatief '86", Ghent, 1986
19. B/W photograph : *Barcelona 1981 Towers, Housing (&) the City (Scale & Perspective)*, Façade study, drawing, 1990-91
20. B/W photograph : *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona (Scale & Perspective)*, model, 1989
21. Coloured copy : *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona (Scale & Perspective), exploded view*, drawing, 1989
22. 35x24 mm. slide : *Rotterdam, "De Hei", Sky plaza with civil registry offices*, Study I, model, 1990
23. Photocopy : *Rotterdam, recycling of the vertical lift bridge over the Koningshaven, Preliminary study I : Sky plaza with civil registration offices*, 1989

Selection of works since 1991 :

24. Cibachrome : *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona, Detail staircase*, mock-up, installation for Kröller-Müller Museum, 1991
25. 35x24 mm. slide : *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona, Detail 'culture' deck and 'sports' deck with swimming pool*, model, 1991-92
26. Cibachrome : *Housing (&) the City, Barcelona, Detail swimming pool*, model, 1991-92
27. Colour photograph : *Journey around the world in 80 days Antwerp - Antwerp via Pacific Ocean 51°13' S - 175°35' W*, ensemble, 1992
28. Cibachrome : *Journey around the world in 80 days Madrid-Weber-Madrid*, on World Map, physical edition, Kümmerly & Frey, Bern, projection van der Grinten, 1992-93